

TO COUNTY MODEL SCHOOL STUDENTS.

FIFTH ARTICLE.

In this article we shall address you on the beginning of your work in your own school. Your "first day at school" will be an important event in your life, to which you will look forward with much interest, and, perhaps, with some anxiety.

In the earlier days in our country it was in many cases a thing to be dreaded, for it was too often a struggle for supremacy between teacher and pupils. The introduction of a new teacher was an important event in the neighborhood, and if the "big boys" could "turn the master out" it was an achievement which always received applause from some people in the section, and which made the victorious youngsters feel more or less as heroes for the time being.

Happily this state of things has passed away forever. It is no longer possible in our schools. Public opinion will no longer tolerate it in any community. If there is any one thing which, more than another, marks the good work done by our schools during the last twenty-five or thirty years, it is the general refinement and cultivation of the tastes of the people, and the high estimate which is almost universally placed upon the work to be done in the schoolroom. Pupils no longer regard the teacher as one to be dreaded or opposed, but rather esteem him as a friend whose companionship they desire, and whose good will they will seek to secure.

This being the condition of things which will meet you in almost every school you may enter, you cannot but feel the importance of so acting your part as a teacher that these kindly feelings extended to you at your introduction may receive no rough shock at your hands, and that the high appreciation in which the teacher is held in the section may only be the more increased as your character as a person and worth as a teacher become the better known.

Notwithstanding this good feeling which will be extended to you at the outset, you must understand that its continuance will depend largely upon the way in which you begin your work as a teacher. Some young teachers—fortunately they are but few in number—have so exalted an idea of themselves because they have obtained a certificate that they go into a section on stilts, as it were. They will seek no advice and listen to no suggestion. Any assistance that may be offered they regard as an interference with their authority, and by this foolish course render themselves offensive and restrict their usefulness.

It is very unwise upon taking charge of a school to make any material change in the organization. When a teacher has become well established in a school he may make changes, but it is very dangerous for a "new teacher" to do this. It is very unlikely that any changes will be necessary.

Uniform promotion examinations are now established in almost every county,

and schools are regularly classified in accordance with these. It will be much better to take the classification of your predecessor, and work under it for some time until you and your pupils have become well acquainted with each other.

It is a rare thing to find pupils do as well when examined by a stranger as when examined by their old teacher. Your manner is new to them, and your method of questioning may be quite different from that to which they have been accustomed. You must make large allowance for this difference, and for the natural diffidence so often found in young children. But if after making due allowance for these things the results are still disappointing, we would advise you to guard against seeking to belittle the reputation of your predecessor in the school. Better throw the mantle of charity over his shortcomings, and feel that you have treated a fellow teacher as you would wish to be treated in return. Even after putting forth your best efforts, your successor may have equal grounds of complaint against you.

If, after sufficient time has elapsed, you feel satisfied that some changes must be made, it will be well to consult the trustees and ask the inspector to visit your school and sanction your course. This will relieve you of any responsibility.

When you have secured a school it will be well for you, if possible, to visit it a few days before it is closed for the present year. You can then meet the present teacher and learn much about the school. You can learn what classes there are, where the pupils are working, how often they recite, and many other things which will enable you to prepare for taking charge of the school. You can also have, by this means, a pleasant introduction to the pupils and to some of the people—an introduction which will indicate an interest, on your part, in the work which you are about to undertake.

Before your "first day," you should prepare sets of examination questions for all classes down to the second class, or Part II., in all subjects, so that you may have plenty of material on hand to furnish work for your pupils. Two or three sets of questions of different degrees of difficulty in each subject will be useful. The questions should engage the class for about an hour. These may be dictated to the pupils or placed upon the blackboard. It may be well to have a few quires of paper ready for a written examination in some subjects by the fourth and third classes. You can thus keep two or three classes busy at their seats while you are engaged with the junior classes. Arrange your questions so that the consideration of the answers will not require much of your time.

The great point is to have plenty of work for your pupils, and to leave yourself plenty of leisure to *observe* the school, and to go around among the pupils to see what they are doing. Do not spend too much of your first day or of your first week on the platform. Keep as close as possible to your pupils. Pass among them quietly, look at their work, see if

you can assist them, give a kind word of encouragement as you go by, and let everyone feel that there is a full, broad eye—not a peering, suspicious eye—on *everything* in the school.

It is a painful thing to see a young teacher standing before his school not knowing what to do to keep the children employed. It has a bad effect upon all. The pupils lose confidence in the teacher, and soon come to regard him as a weakling. On the other hand, if he can, without hesitation or delay, set the school at work, and, by fertility and readiness of resource, keep everything going and in good order, without any apparent effort or nervousness, the pupils will regard him with the greatest respect. And fortunate is the teacher of whom his pupils' impressions at the end of the first day are favorable. A good beginning has been made, and that counts for a great deal. It is not necessary, nor is it desirable, that you should teach much at first. You are not ready to begin regular teaching the first day, or the first week. You are not sufficiently acquainted with your pupils to know where to begin. Your first duty is to find out as far as possible what your pupils know, and to learn all you can of their natural abilities.

It is no more necessary for a builder to first lay a foundation for his building than it is for you to have an accurate knowledge of your pupils' attainments as the guide to your teaching. Much of the discouragement caused to both pupils and teachers and much of the loss of faithful labor are the results of pupils not being ready to receive and to be benefited by the teaching that is placed before them.

In classes above the first form much of the work will be in teaching from the known to the related unknown, and if the foundation or the *known* be uncertain much of the labor must of necessity go for nothing.

We would, therefore, strongly advise you not to be too eager to begin teaching at once, but rather to aim first to secure perfect control of your school and to know your pupils as thoroughly as possible.

To this end it will be wise for you to visit the homes of your pupils and learn of their surroundings. You will often learn more of the inner life of a child from a single visit to its home than can be learned, perhaps, in months of daily contact in the schoolroom.

You may find it necessary to modify your opinions as to a child, and to materially change your treatment of him, from information which you have gained from visiting the fireside around which he has been trained. You cannot know too much of your pupils nor of their environments.

You need not wait for an invitation to make these visits. You will always be kindly received and always be made welcome. If you are influenced by no higher motives than those of personal interest, it will pay you to visit the homes of your pupils and to speak of their school work in a kind and judicious manner. It will please the pupils, and make your task